

4VAC15-50-91

Game: Bear: Checking bear and tooth submission by persons exempt from license requirements or holding a license authorization number.

Summary:

This proposal is to remove all references to checking, check stations, and check cards to reflect the requirement for all big game harvests to be reported electronically using either the telephone, internet, or GoOutdoors Virginia mobile harvest reporting application beginning in the 2021-22 hunting season.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-50-91. Checking Reporting bear and tooth submission by persons exempt from license requirements or holding a license authorization number.

A. Upon killing a bear, any person (i) exempt from license requirements as prescribed in § [29.1-301](#) of the Code of Virginia, (ii) issued a complimentary license as prescribed in § [29.1-339](#) of the Code of Virginia, (iii) holding a permanent license issued pursuant to § [29.1-301](#) E of the Code of Virginia, or (iv) the holder of a Virginia license authorization number issued by a telephone or electronic media agent pursuant to § [29.1-327](#) B of the Code of Virginia shall, upon vehicle transport of the carcass or at the conclusion of legal hunting hours, whichever occurs first, and without unnecessary delay, ~~present the carcass to an authorized bear checking station or to any appropriate representative of the department in the county or adjoining county in which the bear was killed, or~~ report the kill through the department's automated harvest reporting system. At such time, the person checking or reporting the carcass shall be given a ~~black bear check card furnished by the department or a~~ confirmation number from the automated reporting system. ~~If checked at a bear check station, the black bear check card must be kept in possession with the carcass until the carcass is processed. If the carcass is left unattended, the black bear check card must be securely attached to the carcass. If after~~ the kill is reported using the automated harvest reporting system, the successful hunter shall immediately create written documentation including the successful hunter's full name, the date the animal was killed, and the confirmation number. This written documentation must be kept in possession with the carcass until the carcass is processed. If the automated harvest reported carcass is transferred to the possession of another individual, the written documentation must be transferred with the carcass to the individual and kept in possession with the carcass until the carcass is processed. If the carcass is left unattended, this written documentation must be securely attached to the carcass. Processed carcass parts of a black bear killed legally in Virginia may be transported; however, upon request of any authorized law-enforcement officer, sufficient verbal or written information necessary to properly establish legal possession must be furnished immediately.

~~B. If the bear is checked at a bear checking station, the person checking the carcass shall surrender or allow to be removed one premolar tooth from the carcass. If the kill is reported through the department's automated harvest reporting system, a A premolar tooth must be removed by the hunter immediately after reporting the kill through the department's automated harvest reporting system. The premolar shall be placed in an envelope furnished by the department and labeled with the hunter's full name, check confirmation number, date of kill, and the sex of the harvested bear. This envelope with premolar and accompanying information must be mailed or delivered to the department no later than 14 days after the close of the bear harvest season.~~

C. It shall be unlawful for any person to destroy the identity of the sex of any bear killed until the bear is checked reported as required by this section. Successful bear hunters are allowed to dismember the

carcass to pack it out from the place of kill as long as they do not destroy the identity of the sex and all the parts of the carcass are present when the bear is ~~checked at an authorized bear check station or~~ reported through the automated harvest reporting system. Any bear that has not been ~~checked, reported through the~~ department's automated harvest reporting system as required by this section, found in the possession of any person exempt from the license requirements or holding a license authorization number shall be forfeited to the Commonwealth to be disposed of as provided by law.

Rationale:

Beginning in the fall of 2021 all harvest reporting will occur electronically through either the telephone, internet, or GoOutdoors mobile application. Mandatory game checking, a cornerstone of DWRs game management program for more than 70 years, will remain vital for game management in Virginia for many years to come. Thus, it is critical that every hunter report their harvest using one of the electronic reporting systems. Since 2004, DWR has offered some form of electronic reporting, and beginning in 2019, electronic reporting options were available for all species for which reporting is required. In fall 2019, 86% of all deer, 93% of fall turkeys, 100% of spring turkeys, 100% of bobcats, and 58% of all bears were reported through an electronic reporting system.

The proposed amendments remove all references to physical check stations and check cards for license exempt hunters.